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Inventory for Manuscript Collection MS-216

Capt. Robert W. Parker Papers
Inclusive dates: 1838-1859
Bulk dates: 1847-1858

by
Denise M. Fields
Edited by Anastasia S. Weigle
June 2012

Shelf feet: .5 linear feet
Number of boxes: 1
Accession 80.8.4-18

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Abstract

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Parker, Robert W., *Captain*, 1829-1905

Papers, 1838-1859 (Bulk dates: 1847-1858)

1 box, (.5 Shelf feet)

Ship captain from Phippsburg, Maine

Included are account book, invoices, receipts, protection certificate, crew wage accounts, charter party, one bill of lading and one articles of agreement for the ships *Martha Whitmore* and *William Patten.* The account book records Parker's career on various vessels as a seaman before he commanded the ship *Martha Whitmore*. Other vessel papers include a registration paper for the ship *Queen Victoria* and a cargo book for the Brig *Caledonia*. Family papers include genealogy information and correspondence. A few ephemeral items are also in this collection. Papers are organized in three series: Series I: Capt. Robert W. Parker, Series II: Parker Family papers and Series III: Miscellaneous papers.

Donated by Mrs. [Laura] Ivan Orcutt.

MS-216. Accession No. 80.8.4-18

Related material available at museum repository; Acc. No. 80.8.1-3

Finding aid available in repository; folder and item level control

Added entries—people

Parker, Robert W., *Captain*

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Assyria (Ship)
Caledonia (Brig)
Globe (Bark)
Harvest Queen (Ship)
John C. Calhoun (Ship)
Martha Whitmore (Ship)
Milan (Ship)
Queen Victoria (Ship)
William Patten (Ship)

Added entries—places:

Georgetown (ME)
Phippsburg (ME)

Added entries—key terms:

Business Cards
Charter-parties
Freight and freightage
Invoices
Letters
Merchant seamen
Sea captains
Seamanship
Seafaring
Voyages and travels
Wages

Acquisition

The papers were donated to the Maine Maritime Museum by Mrs. [Laura] Ivan Orcutt February of 1980 as part of a larger donation that included a watercolor painting of the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship), photograph of Captain Parker and a photograph of an additional painting of the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship).

Provenance

In a letter sent to Mr. Charles E. Burden of the Marine Research Society of Bath [currently the Maine Maritime Museum] on February 13, 1980, Mrs. [Laura] Ivan Orcutt stated *"I came across these papers of Capt. Parker's and am sending them to you ..."* Since Mrs. Orcutt is the great niece of Capt. Robert Parker, these papers may have been passed on to her from Parker family relatives.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the study or use of these materials.

Physical Condition

The majority of the papers in this collection are in good condition with only a few tears and surface dirt. Many of the papers are placed in either Melinex or archival Mylar sheets.

The crew accounts book is three-quarter bound leather book with marbled paper covers. Part of the leather spine is detached and many of the account wage pages have been covered over with news clippings obscuring most of the information. The book and spine are tied together with cotton cord.

Biographical Notes

Captain Robert W. Parker was born May 1829 in Phippsburg, Maine the son of Capt. Robert Parker (b. 01/13/1795 / d. 07/06/1873) and Pricilla Nichols (b. abt. 1800 / d. ?). He married Arabela (also shown as Bella C., b. March 1843 / d.?) in approximately 1875. According to the 1900 census they had two children, but neither were still living in 1900. No children are listed on the 1880 census and due to the destruction of census records for 1890, no census data exists. Capt. Parker's death certificate lists Phippsburg as his place of birth, however, all census records show him living in Bangor.[1] A certificate of protection dated December 9, 1858, describes Captain Parker as being 29 years old, 5 feet 6 inches and having black eyes and hair with a dark complexion.[2]

The Parker family genealogy has been traced back to John Parker who settled on Parker's Island, Maine in 1629. Originally known as Ruscohegon and Erascohegan, Parker Island lies between the mouth of the Sheepscot and Kennebec Rivers and was

purchased from Chief Mowhotiwormet for a hogshead of rum and some pumpkins. The Massachusetts General Court incorporated as the area as Georgetown-on-Arrowsic in 1716; the area included Parker's Island, Woolwich, Phippsburg and Bath. By 1841, all areas of Georgetown had been set off and incorporated as towns leaving Parker's Island as the only remaining area of Georgetown.[3,4] The Kennebec River valley was plagued by Indian attacks from 1676 through 1760. A letter dated Aug 31, 1874 written by Margery Reed Potter [see Scope and Content notes, folder 12] provides the reader with information regarding the early residents on the island, Indian interactions, and the Parker family geneology.[5]

Captain Parker voyaged on several vessels between 1847 and 1856 and kept a personal account book which begins with his voyage on the *Milan* (Ship) on December 2, 1847 where he sailed to New Orleans, Liverpool, and New York. A second voyage went from New York to Liverpool. Parker does not list his crew rank for these voyages but does list his wages to be ten dollars a month. He changed vessels on November 4, 1848 when he joined the *Globe* (Bark) as ordinary seamen with a wage of thirteen dollars per month. During his two years on the *Globe* (Bark), Parker made many trans-Atlantic voyages and makes note of being at many ports including: Bath, Boston, Cardiff, Charleston, Cronstadt, Gloucester, Havana, Havre, Liverpool, London, New York, Philadelphia, and Savannah. After one year he rose to the rank of second mate and his wages increased to fifteen dollars a month then to twenty dollars a month.

In Savannah, Parker joined the *John C. Calhoun* (Ship) as second mate on November 22, 1851 with a wage of $25 per month. He sailed with the *John C. Calhoun* (Ship) for two voyages; the first traveling from Charleston to Liverpool then to New Orleans. During his second voyage while sailing between Cronstadt and Liverpool, Parker wrote to his brother.

> *"I suppose you will think I am doing well enough where I am and as far as that goes I have nothing to complain of I have as good times aboard of this ship as ever I could wish in any present capacity and as good wages if not better than are going as for the captain I never expect to get along better with any man than I do with him. But I want to be doing something for myself or else making little more money $25 a month appears good pay to you I suppose but I can tell you it is as much as I can do to have what little I do and there is scarcely an officer of a ship out of fifty as far as I know that does as well as that my mate for instance only sent home $50 off of last voyage whilst his wages are $10 a month more than mine his is no drunken sailor character either but I do not let these things influence me only do the best I can. Father can tell you about this as well as I can he know how money goes in every port especially with American officers it seems to be the impression in all foreign ports that we are made of money."* [6]

His letter also provides an example of the life of a seaman. He writes:

> *"As to the course I have chosen I hardly know what to say about it so far I have been contented and think it is as good as anything else I could have done it is a curious life to be sure, sometimes here and sometimes there, plenty of work at times then again nothing to do, rough weather*

and fair, one day in port and the next at sea, greeting friends one hour and almost next you are leaving them, so it goes." [6]

On March 23, 1853, Parker shipped on the *Harvest Queen* (Ship) as mate with a wage of thirty dollars per month where he continued on the Atlantic trade routes until November 29, 1854 when he shipped as mate on the *Assyria* (Ship). On the *Assyria* (Ship), Parker earned a wage of forty-seven dollars per month as they sailed from Bath to Liverpool and on to New Orleans. Parker left the *Assyria* (Ship) in March of 1856 to go to the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship) where he became captain on July 17, 1856. His personal account book is well documented and shows Captain Parker's ascent in rank as well as pay.[7]

Little is known about his time on the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship). There is one extant receipt dated October 31, 1856 for dock fees in Cardiff in this collection. In a letter to his brother, Jim, dated January 23, 1858, Captain Parker recounts the events of a bad storm that occurred while he was having repairs done to his foremast at Fayal Island, Azores. The storm began on January 16 and continued through January 20, 1858. Seventeen vessels were in the harbor at the start of the storm and nine were driven ashore and became a total loss including two American vessels the *Pathfinder* (Schooner) and the *North Sea* (?). Captain Parker cut away his main and mizzen masts to avoid the same fate. On the third day of the storm, the crew was taken ashore.[8] Capt. Parker writes,

"My fore mast was on shore to finish the mast head and thus was saved I cannot get spars large enough here and shall have to take my fore mast for the main and get smaller sticks for the fore and mizzen." [9]

A watercolor painting (80.008.1) donated with these papers depicts this scene. With his vessel jury-rigged, Captain Parker states, "if I could have good weather (which is a rare thing in these parts) I should be able to get through in three weeks." [9]

From the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship), Captain Parker took command of the *William Patten* (Ship). Capt. Parker is listed as captain in *American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping*, 1859 for the *William Patten* (Ship) but I could not find him listed as captain at any later time on any other vessel.

A charter party, dated August 12, 1858, shows that Captain Parker was engaged to take the *William Patten* (Ship) and a load of iron rails and railway chairs to Venice. Extant papers show that he was in Venice on December 1, 1858. Other papers in this collection appear to be from a separate voyage including articles of agreement from "Liverpool to ports in the Mediterranean Sea." Unfortunately, this document is not dated but Captain Parker and the *William Patten* (Ship) were in Liverpool on July 8, 1859 as shown by a bill of lading for shipment of coal from Liverpool to Malta or other ports in the Mediterranean. A letter dated September 1, 1859 from John Joseph & Co., Ship Brokers of Liverpool to Capt. Parker states,

"I am in receipt of your esteemed favor of the 27th August, and am much disappointed at the agent of [Mr.] Battersby having forced you to allow 1/ for staying and landing your cargo at Malta….it

was very shabby to force you to allow a 1/ per ton in lieu of going to Constantinople." [10]

Later in the same letter, Mr. Joseph writes,

"I suppose you will go on for cotton as there will be a large crop to send to this country." [10]

It is unknown if Captain Robert W. Parker did go on for cotton or any other cargo as this is the last document pertaining to his life at sea in this collection. Census records from 1880 list his occupation as sea captain and in 1900 he is listed as millinery—wholesale. Captain Robert W. Parker died in Bangor, Maine of heart disease in 1905 at age 75.

References cited:

1. Vital stats. Ancestry.com and Rootsweb.com
2. Certification of Protection. December 9, 1858. MS-216 B1/F4
3. Parker genealogy. MS-54 B0x 12
4. History of Georgetown, Maine. http://www.georgetownme.com, accessed June, 14, 2012
5. Potter, Margery Reed. Letter. Aug 31, 1874. MS-216 B1/F13
6. Parker, Robert W. Letter. Sept 7, 1852. MS-216 B1/F14
7. Personal Account Book, Capt. Robert W. Parker. MS-216, B1/F1
8. New York Times. February 27, 1858. http://nautarch.tamu.edu/shiplab/01monteiro/Faial-1858.htm
9. Parker, Robert W. Letter. January 23, 1858. MS-216, B1/F14
10. Joseph, John. Letter. September 1, 1859. MS-216, B1/F3

Scope and Content Notes

The Captain Robert W. Parker papers consist of a single box of records primarily pertaining to Capt. Parker's activities on multiple vessels between 1847-1859. Items in the collection include Capt. Parker's account book (1847-56) from when he was a seaman aboard numerous vessel. These vessels are *Milan* (Ship), *Globe* (Bark), the *John C. Calhoun* (Ship), *Harvest Queen* (Ship), and *Assyria* (Ship). This constitutes a history of his career, up to the point he became a master. The last page of the account book Robert W. Parker writes,

"Left ship Assyria at New Orleans about Mar. 18th, 1856 to go in the ship Martha Whitmore of Richmond. July 17, 1856, Tool command of the M. Whitmore"

This personal account book also gives Parker's crew rank as well as ports visited on each voyage.

The majority of the vessel papers are for the *William Patten* (Ship) and Capt. Parker's voyage to Venice and Trapani, Italy although other ports are mentioned. Items in

this group include: certificate of survey, charter party, a bill of lading, articles of agreement, and a Proof of Citizenship/Protection Certificate for safe and free passage for Capt. Parker dated Dec 9, 1858.

A Crew Accounts with Timetables book is included with this collection. The first few pages list the brig *Caura* with Captain [Kipper] as shipmaster before we see the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship) and the *William Patten* (Ship) with Robert W. Parker as shipmaster. Unfortunately, the account book was later used as a scrapbook for news clippings making it impossible to view the information underneath. Other pages within the book have been cut out.

Personal papers include a letter dated August 31, 1874 written by Margery Reed Potter giving an account of the Parker family's early genealogy. Margery Reed Beath, was born 1790 in Phippsburg. Maine (not Boothbay as she states in her paper). She is the daughter of Joseph Beath and Mary Pelham and was named after her father's sister. Margery Reed married David Potter in Boothbay, Maine around 1810. When Margery Reed was 10 years old, she lived with her father's sister, whose last name was Parker in Georgetown.

There are two letters written by Capt. Robert W. Parker to his brother Jim (James) discussing life aboard the *John C. Calhoun* (Ship) and recounting a storm at Fayal Island, Azores while aboard the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship). Miscellaneous papers include three (3) advertising cards from Malta, Leghorn [Italy], and Liverpool for commission agent and ship chandlers and a memorial pamphlet for Captain Samuel J. Lunt from the *Edinburgh* (Brig). The connection between Capt. Lunt and Capt. Parker is not clear.

Also included is a Ships Registry for the *Queen Victoria* (Ship) of New York for the Port of Bath. This is the oldest document in the collection dated October 26, 1838. The document identifies the shipmaster as Wilder T. Thompson of New York and co-owner with Rufus K. Page of Hallowell, Maine. The registry is signed by J. Sewall, collector. Attached to the registry is a deposition dated January 1, 1841 between Ben'j. [Benjamin] D. Barttell and Rufus K. Page, et. al, owners of the ship *Queen Victoria.* There is no reference to Robert W. Parker (who was 12 years old at that time).

Lastly, a cargo record book for the *Caledonia* (Brig) from which many pages have been cut out. The book is dated March 30, 1850 and has two vessel names written on the inside cover: the brig *Drummond* and brig *Caledonia*. It is unclear at this time how these two vessels are connected to Captain Robert W. Parker other than the Drummond name is in the Parker family line.

Processing Notes

The collection was surveyed and reorganized to better fit within Capt. Parker's maritime career separating vessel related papers from family papers. The series are as follows: Series I—Capt. Robert S. Parker, Series II—Parker Family Papers, and Series III—Miscellaneous papers.

A chart was created that lists vessels, ranks and ports of calls with approximate dates based on journal entries, invoices, charter parties, and other related papers found in this collection was created to follow Capt. Robert W. Parker's maritime career. This table is placed after the container list in the finding aids.

Organization and Description of Series

Series I. Capt. Robert W. Parker (1847-1856).

Subseries Ia. Vessel related papers: Majority of papers are for the ship *William Patten* which Capt. Parker commanded and includes correspondence, invoices and receipts, protection certificate, a charter party, a bill of lading, an articles of agreement, and a crew wage account book. Also included is an account book from when Robert W. Parker was a seaman and one receipt for dock dues for the *Martha Whitmore* (Ship).

Subseries Ib. Other vessel related papers. Ships Registry for the *Queen Victoria* (Ship) of New York and a cargo book for the Caledonia. Not related to Capt. Parker.

Series II. Family Papers (1874, 1852-1858). Genealogy papers and family letters.

Series III. Miscellaneous papers, (1858). Advertising cards and a memorial for Captain Samuel J. Lunt from the *Edinburgh* (Brig).

MS 216 Captain Robert W. Parker Papers
Container List

Box#	Folder#	
SERIES I. Captain Robert W. Parker		
		Subseries Ia. Vessel related papers
1	1	Account book, various vessels, 1847-1856
	2	*Martha Whitmore* (Ship), dock dues, Port and Cardiff, 1856
		William Patten (Ship)
	3	Capt. Robert W. Parker, Correspondence, 1858-1859
		Outgoing, Baring Bros., Dec. 27, 1858
		Incoming, John Joseph, Shipbroker, Sept. 1, 1859
	4	Accounts, general
		Antwerp, Sept. 1858
		Venice (ITA) December 1858
		Liverpool, July 1859
		Trapani, Oct. 1859
	5	Charter Party, Antwerp to Venice, August 12, 1858
	6	Bill of Lading, bound for Malta, July 8, 1859
		Accounts—crew
	7	Articles of Agreement, Liverpool to Malta, [Apr. 1859?]
	8	Crew Account book, 1856-1858
		Subseries Ib. Other Vessel RelatedPapers
	10	Ship registry *Queen Victoria* (Ship), 1838-41
	11	Cargo Record Book for the *Caledonia* (Brig), 1850
SERIES II. Parker Family Papers		
	12	Parker Family Genealogy, written by Margery Reed Potter, 1874,
	13	Personal letters to Capt. Parker's brother James (Jim), 1852, 1858
SERIES III. Miscellaneous papers		
	14	Advertising cards, n.d.
	15	Memorial pamphlet, Samuel J. Lunt, Master of brig *Edinburgh*, 1858

Capt. Robert W. Parker List of Vessels, Rank, and Ports of Call

(these are approximate dates based on journal entries, invoices, charter parties, etc.)

VESSEL NAME	*TYPE*	*RANKING*	*VOYAGE departure date*	*VOYAGE arrival date*	*PORT of destination*
Milan	Ship	?	Dec. 2, 1848	March 3, 1848	New Orleans
			April 19, 1848	May 11, 1848	Liverpool
			June 11, 1848	June 17, 1848	New York
			July 13, 1848	[Oct. 1848 ?]	Liverpool
Globe	Bark	Ordinary seaman	Nov. 4, 1848	March 26, 1849	Savannah to Liverpool
			[Mar/Apr 1849?]	May 9, 1849	Philadelphia
Globe	Bark	Able bodied seaman	June 6, 1849	August 10, 1849	Liverpool
			[August 1849?]	October 9, 1849	Philadelphia
			Oct. 9, 1849	Nov. 1, 1849	Savannah
Globe	Bark	Second mate	Nov. 1, 1849	Dec. 24, 1849	Boston
			Dec. 24, 1849	April 11, 1850	Havana
				June 29, 1850	Cronstadt
				Aug. 24, 1850	Gloucester
				Oct 1, 1850	Cardiff
				Nov. 1850	Savannah
			Dec. 24, 1850	Feb 9, 1851	Havre
				April 13, 1851	Havana
				June 1851	Falmouth
				July 1851	London
				Oct. 13, 1851	New York
			[Oct. 14, 1851]	Nov. 22, 1851	Charleston
John C. Calhoun	Ship	Second mate	Nov. 22, 1851	Jan/Feb 1851	Liverpool
				May 10, 1851	New Orleans
			May 10, 1852	July 25, 1852	Cronstadt
				Sept 18, 1852	Liverpool
				[Oct. 1852]	Philadelphia
Harvest Queen	Ship	[First] mate	March 23, 1853	May 5, 1853	New Orleans
			May 30, 1853	July 30, 1853	Havre
			[Aug. 24, 1853?]	Oct. 14, 1853	New York
			Oct. 14, 1853	January 1854	Havre
				March 1854	New Orleans
				???	Liverpool
Assyria	Ship	[First]mate		Nov. 29, 1854	Bath
				March 1955	New Orleans
			Sept. 1855	Nov. 1855	Liverpool
				March 15, 1856	New Orleans
Martha Whitmore	Ship	[First mate]	July 17, 1856		
		Captain	????	Oct. 31, 1856	Cardiff
William Patten	Ship	Captain		Jan. 23, 1858	Fayal (Azores)
				Aug.12, 1858	Antwerp
			Sept. 11, 1858	Dec. 24, 1858	Venice, Italy
				Sept. 1859	Trapani, Italy
				July 9, 1859	Liverpool
			July 9, 1859	?	Malta